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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 549 - APRIL 24, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTS THAT THE CEASE FIRE IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF THE CITY CONTINUES TO HOLD. ARMED CHRISTIAN MILITIA REMAIN ON THE STREETS IN EAST BEIRUT. DURING THE DAY LIFE THROUGHOUT THE CITY APPEARS NORMAL, ALTHOUGH SCHOOLS IN EAST BEIRUT ARE CLOSED. AT NIGHT THERE IS SPORADIC SHOOTING AND EXPLOSIONS, MUCH OF THIS IS BELIEVED TO BE CRIMINAL RATHER THAN POLITICAL.

2. OVER THE WEEKEND, HOWEVER, PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON FIRED UPON THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE AROUND MARJAYOUN. NO ONE WAS INJURED AND MAJOR HADDAD ORDERED HIS FORCES NOT TO RETURN THE FIRE. CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN COMPLAINED TO THE ISRAELIS THAT HADDAD HAD NOT LET THEM DEFEND THEMSELVES. THIS IS A FURTHER INDICATION THAT HADDAD, WHO APPEARS TO BE ATTEMPTING TO PREVENT FURTHER HOSTILITIES AND TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE LOCAL MUSLIMS, IS COMING UNDER INCREASING CRITICISM FROM CHRISTIAN HARDLINERS.

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3. MEANWHILE, PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS ON THE SIDON-TYRE ROAD WARNED NEWSMEN FROM BEIRUT THAT THEY COULD NOT CROSS THE LITANI UNLESS THEY OBTAINED A PASS FROM THE PALESTINIANS. THIS ACTION REPORTEDLY IS CAUSING MUCH CONCERN TO THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT.

4. ALSO IN THE SOUTH, ON APRIL 19, REBEL LEBANESE ARAB ARMY (LAA) SOLDIERS, LED BY LAA REBEL OFFICERS, ATTACKED AND TOOK OVER THE LEBANESE ARMY BARRACKS IN NABATIYA. A SMALL LEBANESE ARMY CONTINGENT HAD BEEN SENT TO THE BARRACKS ABOUT SIX WEEKS AGO TO REESTABLISH A PRESENCE IN NABATIYAH. THIS SMALL CONTINGENT HAD HAD SEVERAL INCIDENTS WITH PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE LEFTISTS. ON APRIL 19 ANOTHER LEBANESE ARMY UNIT HAD SET UP A ROADBLOCK NORTH OF NABATIYA AND HAD ATTEMPTED TO ARREST SOME PALESTINIANS, WHICH PRECIPITATED THE ATTACK ON THE BARRACKS. LEBANESE ARMY HEADQUARTERS REACTED STRONGLY TO THE INCIDENT AND APPEAR TO BE USING IT TO UNIFY ITS RANKS AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE ARMY.

5. IN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, FOLLOWING A MEETING LAST FRIDAY OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPRESENTING THE MAJOR PARLIAMENTARY BLOC, SPEAKER KAMAL ASSAD ANNOUNCED THAT AN AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED. THIS AGREEMENT, ABOUT WHICH NO DETAILS WERE GIVEN, WAS CALLED THE "GREATEST VICTORY IN FOUR YEARS" BY GENAYEL. FORMER PRIME MINISTER RASHID SOLH SAID "WE CAN NOW SPEAK IN THE NAME OF LEBANON...WE

ARE PROFOUNDLY HAPPY." THERE ARE INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT ONE ELEMENT UPON WHICH THEY AGREED WAS THE RESTRICTION OF PALESTINIAN FREEDOM. ARAFAT, IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE THE MUSLIM LEADERS, HELD A MEETING WITH SAEB SALAM, THE LEADING SUNNI WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE AGREEMENT.

6. SPEAKER KAMAL ASSAD PURSUED HIS EFFORTS TOWARD NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WITH A SECOND DAY OF SECRET

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MEETINGS OF DEPUTIES REPRESENTING ALL BLOCS. THESE LEADERS GAVE THEIR SUPPORT TO SARKIS IN HIS ATTEMPT TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT, BUT WHETHER THIS SUPPORT WILL GO BEYOND WORDS IS STILL IN QUESTION. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. PLO. PLO CHIEF YASIR ARAFAT HAS IN RECENT DAYS MOVED AGAINST PALESTINIAN RADICALS IN LEBANON WHO APPARENTLY WERE OPENLY OPPOSING HIS INSTRUCTIONS THAT PALESTINIAN COMMANDOS RESPECT THE CEASEFIRE AND AVOID HARASSING UNIFIL TROOPS IN THE SOUTH. IN WHAT SEEMS TO HAVE DEVELOPED INTO A MAJOR CRACKDOWN, FATAH SECURITY FORCES HAVE DETAINED OVER 100 OF THESE RADICALS AND FOUGHT

SEVERAL FIREFIGHTS WITH THEM. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, ANOTHER FATAH-RADICAL CLASH OCCURRED YESTERDAY NEAR NABATIYAH IN WHICH SEVERAL PALESTINIANS DIED ON BOTH SIDES.

8. ARAFAT'S ACTION HAS APPARENTLY BEEN DIRECTED AT TWO GROUPS--THE IRAQI-SUPPORTED RADICAL "BLACK JUNE" ORGANIZATION AND FATAH HARDLINER DISSIDENTS. RATHER THAN INDICATING A RIFT WITHIN THE PLO, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THE CRACKDOWN LIKELY REFLECTS ARAFAT'S ENHANCED STATURE WITHIN FATAH AND THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE SINCE THE ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON. SUCH A MAJOR MOVE ON HIS PART IS VERY UNUSUAL; IN PAST CASES OF INTRA-PALESTINIAN DIFFERENCES, ARAFAT HAS SOUGHT TO COMPROMISE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO PARTIALLY SATISFY EACH FACTION WITHOUT IMPINGING ON HIS OVERALL AUTHORITY AND TO MAINTAIN A SEMBLANCE OF UNITY. THAT ARAFAT HAS UNDERTAKEN TO CONFRONT THE RADICALS SUGGESTS THAT HE BELIEVES HIMSELF TO BE IN SUFFICIENT CONTROL TO DISREGARD THIS PAST PRACTICE.

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9. INDEED, ARAFAT MAY HAVE ORDERED THE CRACKDOWN AS A MEANS OF SIGNALLING OTHER PALESTINIAN HARDLINERS IN A BROADER CONTEXT TO ABIDE BY HIS WISHES. THESE HARDLINERS HAVE BEEN DISPLEASED WITH ARAFAT'S POLICY OF ACCEPTANCE

OF AND COOPERATION WITH UNIFIL, HIS ATTEMPTS TO KEEP OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH ARAB MODERATES CONCERNING THE PEACE PROCESS, AND HIS LESS THAN WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT FOR THE ARAB "STEADFASTNESS FRONT."

10. ARAFAT'S POLICY OF MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UN, SYRIA AND LEBANON IS NECESSARY, IN THE VIEW OF THE PALESTINIAN MODERATES, DUE TO THE PRESENT PALESTINIAN POSITION IN LEBANON. MILITARILY, THE PLO HAS LOST ITS KEY BASES IN THE SOUTH AND IS SQUEEZED INTO A SMALL "NO-MAN'SLAND" NORTH OF THE LITANI. CONCOMITANTLY, ANTI-PALESTINIAN SENTIMENT IS INCREASING AMONG VARIOUS LEBANESE GROUPS. OF PARTICULAR CONCERN ARE THE INDICATIONS FROM CHRISTIANS AND OTHER LEBANESE THAT THE 1969 CAIRO ACCORDS, WHICH PROVIDE LEGITIMACY TO THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE, SHOULD BE REVIEWED. IT IS HOPED, THEREFORE, IN THE PALESTINIAN PERCEPTION, THAT AN ACCOMMODATING POLICY WILL DEFUSE SOME OF THESE PRESSURES.

11. SYRIAN VIEWS ALSO FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN THE CALCULATIONS OF THE MODERATES. ARAFAT DOES NOT WANT TO PROVOKE SYRIAN IRE, SO AS TO RETAIN THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. IT IS POSSIBLE, IN FACT, THAT ARAFAT'S MOVE AGAINST THE RADICALS MAY HAVE BEEN PARTIALLY

PROMPTED, AT LEAST INDIRECTLY, BY RECENT ASSAD WARNINGS. BY RESPECTING SYRIAN WISHES, ARAFAT PROBABLY HOPES THAT DAMASCUS WILL DAMPEN ANY LEBANESE ATTEMPT TO CONSTRAIN SEVERELY THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE OR OPERATIONS IN LEBANON.

12. ARAFAT'S MOVE, HOWEVER, HAS CAUSED A DETERIORATION
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IN FATAH'S RELATIONS WITH IRAQ, WHICH SHOWED SIGNS OF IMPROVING AS A RESULT OF IRAQ'S LARGE AMOUNTS OF AID DURING THE ISRAELI INVASION. BAGHDAD RADIO CHARGED THAT THE ARRESTS OF IRAQI-SUPPORTED PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT BY FATAH "GANGS." ARAFAT PROBABLY JUDGES, HOWEVER, THAT WITH THE IMMEDIATE NEED FOR IRAQ'S ASSISTANCE NOW DISSIPATED, IRAQ'S SUPPORT IS OF LESSER IMPORTANCE WHEN COMPARED TO SYRIA'S PREDOMINANT ROLE IN LEBANON. (SECRET)

13. ISRAEL. GUSH EMUNIM EXTREMISTS ARE PLANNING TO HOLD TWO PROGOVERNMENT RALLIES ON THE WEST BANK TODAY. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN WILL ATTEND, INDICATING THAT HE AND GUSH LEADERS HAVE QUIETLY HEALED THE RIFT CREATED BY HIS SELF-RULE PROPOSAL FOR THE WEST BANK, WHICH THE GUSH EMUNIM FEARED MIGHT LEAD TO THE CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE.

14. THE MASS MEETINGS ARE TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH THE CELEBRATION OF PASSOVER IN ISRAEL, AND GUSH LEADERS HAVE USED A MIXTURE OF RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL APPEALS IN HOPES OF DRAWING LARGE HOLIDAY CROWDS. THEY ARE PLANNING A WALK, FOR EXAMPLE, FROM THE SETTLEMENT KIRYAT ARBA TO THE TOMB OF THE PATRIARCHS IN NEARBY HEBRON ON THE WEST BANK, FOLLOWED BY A MEETING IN FRONT OF THE WESTERN WALL IN JERUSALEM.

15. THE OSTENSIBLE OBJECT WILL BE TO CELEBRATE THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH QUARTER IN HEBRON, BUT THE GUSH EMUNIM WILL STRESS OPPOSITION TO US PRESSURE AND TO FAINTHEARTEDNES- AT HOME. ONE GUSH HANDOUT SINGLES OUT THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT AND ACCUSES IT OF HELPING ISRAEL'S ENEMIES AND AIDING EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT.

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16. THE GUSH'S CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARD BEGIN HAS ALSO BEEN REFLECTED IN ITS APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO GO ALONG WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S DE FACTO FREEZE ON THE CREATION OF NEW SETTLEMENTS. ACCORDING TO ONE ISRAELI PRESS REPORT, THE GOVERNMENT AND GUSH EMUNIM HAVE DECIDED TO WORK ON INCREASING THE NUMBER OF SETTLERS IN EXISTING SITES ON THE WEST BANK, AT LEAST THROUGH THE END OF THIS SUMMER, RATHER THAN PLAN ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

17. EGYPT. SADAT, IN HIS RECENT MEETING WITH THE US NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE GROUP, REITERATED THAT HE BELIEVED ISRAELI LEADERS ARE "NOT READY FOR PEACE." BEGIN'S "FANATIC BELIEFS" ARE A HINDRANCE, HE ASSERTED, BUT EGYPT'S REAL PROBLEM IS NOT WITH INDIVIDUALS BUT RATHER WITH THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AS A WHOLE. EGYPT IS PREPARED TO TAKE ISRAEL'S SECURITY CONCERNS INTO ACCOUNT, BUT WILL NEVER TOLERATE ANY INFRINGEMENT ON EGYPT'S TERRITORY OR SOVEREIGNTY. HE DECLARED THAT HE HAD NOT DECIDED WHAT TO DO IN OCTOBER 1978 WHEN THE SINAI II PACT EXPIRES. EMBASSY CAIRO NOTED THAT HE HAD ALSO SHOWN DISDAIN FOR KING HUSSEIN'S TIMIDNESS ON JOINING NEGOTIATIONS.

18. THE GROUP ALSO MET WITH MINISTER OF WAR GAMASY, WHO MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS ABOUT EGYPT'S MILITARY:

(A) EGYPT HAS PLANS TO MODERNIZE ITS FORCES, BUT THE MAJOR PROBLEM IS A SOURCE OF ARMS; COOPERATION DOES EXIST WITH BRITAIN AND FRANCE, AND IT IS HOPED SUCH WILL BE THE CASE WITH THE US IN THE FUTURE.

(B) IF ISRAEL IS READY TO MINIMIZE ITS FORCES AS PART OF A PEACE SETTLEMENT, THEN EGYPT WILL REDUCE ITS FORCES AS WELL.

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(C) EGYPT VIEWS THE F-5 PURCHASE AS BEING MORE
POLITICAL THAN MILITARY, SINCE THIS WOULD BE
A "FIRST STEP" TOWARD US-EGYPT MILITARY
COOPERATION.

(D) EGYPT CANNOT ACCEDE TO THE DEMILITARIZATION
OF THE ENTIRE SINAI, AS ISRAEL WISHES, NOR CAN
IT ACCEPT NOT HAVING AN EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE
PRESENCE THERE. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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